



**International Day of Forests
Forestry Debate: Forests and Climate Change
20 March 2015**

Forestry debate – celebrating the International Day of Forests

Building on the success of the celebration of International Day of Forests 2014, which featured lively forestry debates that took place on 21 March 2014, the FAO Regional Office for Asia Pacific (RAP) continued this tradition by organizing three debate contests targeting Bangkok-based high school and university students on 20 March 2015. The debate was organized in collaboration with RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in organizing forestry debates under the theme of *Forests and climate change*.



The event was presided over by Mr Hiroyuki Konuma, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative of FAO RAP, Ms Caroline Liou, Communication Manager for RECOFTC and Ms Keiko Nomura, UN-REDD Programme Officer for UNEP.

Participants in the debate were drawn from four tertiary educational institutes (King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Mahidol University, the Asian Institute of Technology and Kasetsart University) and two Bangkok high schools (Anglo Singapore International School and Garden International School).

Students from King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi and Mahidol University debated the proposition that "*Wood is the "greenest" resource in the world, we should use more of it.*" The students from Kasetsart University and the Asian Institute of Technology debated the proposition that "*Climate change means we should spend more money on protecting forests!*" The students from the two international secondary schools debated the proposition that "*Forestry is not about trees, it is about people.*"

The debate was attended by 63 participants and resulted in a very informative and interesting discussion. The constructive and rebuttal speeches were very well prepared with good

fundamental analyses. Each speaker possessed excellent speaking skills, which helped to stimulate a very interactive discussion.

The students, ranging from high school to post-graduate studies, stressed that forests and forestry issues are highly important. In addition, they demonstrated solid knowledge of forests and forestry issues. Both sides (affirmative and negative teams) were able to present the current issues and challenges faced by the forestry sector and how they could be addressed jointly by relevant stakeholders. Each team debated the topics based on different points of view as to how forests could be managed sustainably in times of climate change and increasing population.

Highlights of arguments - Forestry is not about trees, it is about people!

Affirmative team	Negative team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tree and forests serve the needs of people and we need to recognize and appreciate the contribution of forests in social and economic development. - Forestry is the science, art and craft of creating, managing, using and conserving forests and associated resources in a sustainable manner to meet the needs and desires of the people. - Wood is still in strong demand for household materials and furniture, although it could be replaced by other stronger materials. - People depend on forests today more than ever for the economic, environmental and social values; therefore, we need to learn from our experiences to better manage our forests. - The value of non-wood forest products was estimated at 18.5 billion US dollars in 2005. - At least 40 million people are employed in the forestry sector and at least 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their daily subsistence needs - The key to success is to include local communities in the decision-making and forest management processes. - Forestry is about trees only when trees could provide benefits to people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although we agree that forestry has to benefit human beings, forestry for trees is a better framework to protect members of society as a whole! - People have destroyed and degraded vast areas of forests all over the world. Where there are people living nearby, forests are over-exploited for short-term economic gains until they are eventually converted to other land uses or modern cities. - People should focus on the environmental aspects first, then the economic and social factors next. - People are greedy and they are only looking for economic gains; therefore, forestry should be a counter-balancing force to help the restore the environment for the people. - When we look at economic gains from the forests, what we actually see is that industrial “logging” is taking away the livelihoods of local communities. - Forestry for people will then become forestry for the city and as a result, the indigenous minorities that rely on forests for their livelihoods will be completely pushed aside for large-scale development programs.



Highlights of arguments - Wood is the “greenest” resource in the world, we should use more of it!

Affirmative team	Negative team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Renewable energy is created from natural resources including biomass, and wood could be classified as biomass (i.e., plants or plant-based materials.) - Wood is a good choice of resource that we should use. - Wood is a renewable, clean and efficient resource with a more affordable price compared to other resources. - We need to plant trees so that we can use more wood. - Wood can be used more effectively because it is a renewable resource and we can always create timber plantations to meet our needs. - There are many benefits to using wood. - If we use other resources, such as fossil fuels (which is a non-renewable resource), it will release undesirable gases such as carbon dioxide, and nuclear power produces a lot of radioactive toxins. - Wood could be used for long-term purposes such as for housing, schools and furniture. - We have lost a lot of forest cover over the past decades due to deforestation, but nowadays we have laws to prevent illegal logging and many countries have introduced measures to limit natural forest harvesting. - By enforcing the law, we believe that we can protect our forests better, meaning that we can rebuild our forests and thus could use more of it! - There are a lot of costs involved in building hydroelectric dams and solar power electric plants. We could use the money for these activities to control illegal logging, use of fuelwood, and plant more trees instead! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using trees for wood is not the greenest way to use the natural resources. - Green energy does not mean it will lead people to renewable energy. - The greenest way to use trees is not to cut them or use them, but to keep them to act as carbon storage units. That is the only alternative we have now to reduce greenhouse emissions. - The greenest resource is the resource that can yield the largest amount of energy with the least amount of environmental and social impacts. - Wood is not necessarily green because the energy from fuelwood is derived from the combustion of the wood itself, which releases the carbon that is captured in the wood. - The more we use wood, the more trees will be cut! - We don't think humans have the right to use trees to serve their greed! - The transformation process of logging/transporting and processing wood is going to offset any benefits that wood is going to provide the environment. - We have advanced technology that is classified as green resources such as solar panels and wind turbines, which are more sustainable. - Other alternatives are better than using wood, because they produce higher yields and less emission. - Wood is not a sustainable resource. If we use more wood, it comes at an environmental cost. - Using wood is killing our earth! - Businesses are profit-oriented. If we encourage using more wood, then the demand will increase, often leading to illegal logging. - Millions of people are suffering from chronic hunger and starvation; therefore, it is more important to give attention to poverty and food insecurity eradication rather than prioritizing what type of energy we should use!



Highlights of arguments - Climate change means we should spend more money on protecting forests!

Affirmative team	Negative team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We should spend more money on forest protection as forests are not only home to trees and animals, but also to people! - Forests sustain abundant life on earth! Over 40 percent of the world's oxygen is produced from rainforests. - Forests provide us with many benefits, both directly and indirectly, such as food and shelter and act as barriers against natural disasters. - Forests help maintain the world's temperature. - Protecting forests is protecting the world. - A study from the IPCC confirmed that greenhouse gases emissions from deforestation and forest degradation is 17 percent; therefore, we need to invest in forest restoration and protection! - Forests can reduce carbon dioxide emissions and mitigate climate change impacts. - Forests provide many benefits to people; therefore, we need money to protect forests. - We need money to prepare and develop new policies for sustainable forest management. - Forests are for a better future and a better life, so we must spend money on forest protection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Money should not only be spent on forests, but rather on technology development, agriculture and awareness-raising about climate change. - Spending money on technology is more important because we need more green technologies to increase the efficient use of energy and resources. - We need better technology to create a more resilient environment, such as green roofs and green infrastructure. - We need investment in green technology to combat climate change, meaning we need a big allocation of money for climate change adaptation. - We need to invest money in climate-smart agriculture (CSA), and water resources management. - We will need to increase crop production by 60 percent by 2050 to feed the rising population and CSA and improved water resource management is the answer! - CSA ensures food security, reduces greenhouse gases, and increases the carbon stock. For example, the adoption of the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) in Vietnam increases the yield by 9-15 percent by using 33 percent less water, 20-25 percent less nitrogen fertilizer, and 75 percent less seed and uses less water, reducing methane by 90 percent. - Investment should be focused on water management techniques such as drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting and recycling water to prevent a water scarcity crisis. - More budgets should also be spent on climate change awareness-raising and improving/strengthening forest management mechanisms such as community-based forest management, not on the forests itself.



Message from the Organizers

The theme for the 2015 International Day of Forests is “**Forests | Climate | Change**”

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 21 March to be celebrated as the International Day of Forests each year. The International Day of Forests was established to raise awareness of the importance of forests and trees in ensuring the sustainability of ecosystems, providing valuable goods and services, supporting livelihoods, and reducing hunger.

No solution to climate change can be successful without reducing the alarming rate of deforestation because about 17 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions result from deforestation and forest degradation. In Asia and the Pacific, FAO is working with all levels of society to raise awareness of the importance of forests. On 20 March 2015, three rounds of debates involving high-school and university students were held at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP). “Raising awareness is important, as is successful conclusion of negotiations on a comprehensive international climate change agreement,” said Hiroyuki Konuma, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and Pacific Region.

UNEP’s Regional Director & Representative for Asia and the Pacific, Kaveh Zahedi, highlighted “the important roles that children and youth play in sustainable forest management as they are the leaders of the future.” He added that “their passions and ability to think and debate critically will reflect the future of our forests”.

According to Tint Lwin Thuang, Executive Director of RECOFTC, “In the Asia-Pacific region there are more than 450 million forest-dependent people; therefore, the success of forest protection depends in large part on local people as central actors.” “However, we must understand that the sustainable management of forests by local communities happens when local communities receive real incentives and fair rewards for managing forests sustainably,” Mr Thuang added.

You can view the short video of the debate online via

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_ewo8JpN_Y&feature=youtu.be

